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December 1991

## Avoiding Family Conflicts When Generations Ranch Together

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Hanson, Ronald, "Avoiding Family Conflicts When Generations Ranch Together" (1991). *Range Beef Cow Symposium*. 241.

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## AVOIDING FAMILY CONFLICTS WHEN GENERATIONS RANCH TOGETHER

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### **Areas of Disagreement in a Family Ranch Operation**

1. Decision Making.
  - A. Who has the final say in matters?
  - B. Who is really the boss?
2. Ranch Records.
  - A. Who has the responsibility for keeping records?
  - B. How will records and ranch accounts be handled?
3. Money Spending Policies.
4. Time-Off Policies and Vacations.
5. Family and Business Goals - Setting Priorities.
6. Ranch Employees.
7. Role of Wife (Wives) in the Ranch Business.

### **Human Relationships Necessary For a Successful Family Ranching Operation**

1. Motivation to ranch by son/daughter.
2. Ability to communicate as a family.
  - A. Mutual respect for each other.
  - B. Willingness to listen.
3. Ability to compromise and work things out together.
4. Opportunity for son/daughter to learn and make mistakes.
5. Keep differences in lifestyles (values) between parents and son/daughter out of the ranch business.
6. Remember the other children in the family. Avoid problems of favoritism and jealousy among the children in a family.

### **Common Mistakes in a Family Ranching Operation That Often Lead to Conflicts Between Family Members**

1. Let a father-son relationship turn into a parent-child relationship.
2. Family members "gossip" about each other. Too many misunderstandings.
3. Carrying a "grudge" too long.
4. Let arguments go beyond the boiling point. Family fights develop. No cooling off period.
5. Fail to set family and ranch goals. Do not discuss personal and ranch family priorities. "Not actually running in step."
6. Not able to have frank - open - honest discussions. Not able to "say what you

- mean and mean what you say."
7. Family members not willing to try to work it out together. Not willing to get along.

### **Personal Characteristics of Ranch Families With Strong Family Relationships**

1. Spend time together as a family.
2. Family members are able to communicate and listen to each other.
3. Have a sense of commitment to each other. Develop family loyalty and have family pride.
4. Have a religious faith together as a family.
5. Know how to deal with a crisis.
6. Always focus on the positive elements even in a difficult situation.
7. Family members express appreciation for each other. Show each other that they care.
8. Have fun together as a family. Have a sense of humor. Take personal kidding in stride.
9. Take the time to strengthen family ties and reaffirm their hopes and dreams.

### **Words of Advice to Consider in Building Better Working Relationships Between Ranch Family Members**

1. Don't rush into any type of family business arrangement.
2. Talk things out ahead of time. Too many decisions are made under time pressure or stress.
3. Talk about the "what if" situations. Analyze all possible alternatives/options.
4. Openly discuss (1) goals (2) personal feelings (3) expectations between all family members.
5. Seek outside help/counseling.
6. Practice preventive maintenance.
7. Recognize there will be "moments" in any family situation. Keep a positive attitude.
8. KEEP COMMUNICATIONS OPEN Between ALL Family Members.

### **Strategies to Help Resolve Ranch Family Conflicts**

1. Initiate open and honest discussions.
2. Keep all discussions on an objective and positive basis.
3. Try to identify the real problem cause. "What is it that is really bothering someone?"
4. Be assertive but not aggressive when sharing your views or feelings. State your position without threatening or attacking the opinions of others.
5. Make sure others understand that even though you might disagree, you still love and/or respect them at all times.
6. Avoid "insurmountable/no win" situations.

7. Build a feeling of trust between all family members.
8. Remember it takes (1) Patience, (2) Persistence, (3) Understanding, (4) Courage, (5) Personal Strength and (6) Forgiveness. It takes a lot of effort by all family members for a ranch business to be successful as a family operation.

### **Ideas for Implementing Ranch Family Business Meetings**

1. Set dates so that business meetings are held on a regular basis throughout the entire year.
2. Meeting site should be on neutral territory.
3. Establish an agenda for each meeting so that the meeting itself has a direction and purpose to achieve.
4. Establish any necessary ground rules to be followed during the meeting.
5. Conduct each meeting on a business-like basis. Develop an attitude of professionalism.
6. Keep minutes of any major decisions discussed.
7. Remember that holding family ranch business meetings on a regular basis (1) improves family communications, (2) reinforces the feeling that the family ranch is a team effort among all family members, (3) eliminates any surprises among family members, and (4) helps to keep the "personal or family biases" out of the ranch business operation.

### **Ten Skills for Good Listening Between Ranch Family Members**

1. Do not pass judgment until you have understood what the other person has said.
2. Do not add viewpoints or change what the other person has said.
3. Do not permit your attention to drift away while the other person is still talking.
4. Do not interrupt or change the subject.
5. Do not close your mind.
6. Do not finish for the other person.
7. Do not permit wishful listening.
8. Do not rehearse your response.
9. Do not put the other person off.
10. Do not rush the other person.